

THE VIRGINIA TEACHER

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EDUCATIONAL COMMENT

GEORGE B. KEEZELL

THE death of Senator George B. Keezell on June 22 last brought a feeling of personal loss to alumnae and faculty of the State Teachers College at Harrisonburg. Senator Keezell had been identified with this institution from its very beginning.

He was president of its first board of trustees. During his long service in the Virginia legislature he had always been interested in its welfare. On May 15 he was one of the honored guests at the dedication of Wilson Hall.

It was on March 14, 1928, in observance of the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the college, that Senator Keezell gave a complete account of the circumstances under which the college here was established. In this speech, which was published in the VIRGINIA TEACHER for May, 1928 (Vol. IX, pp. 133-140), he tells of the impassé which seemed about to block any legislative action. "It was then that I went to Governor Swanson," he wrote, "to try to enlist his aid to get the bill before the House. He asked me a question. 'Why don't you do as is frequently done in Congress: write this bill as an amendment to, and a rider on, the appropriation bill?'

I thanked the Governor for his suggestion."

Editorial comment on the large service of Senator Keezell to the entire State of Virginia appeared in all the more important newspapers of the state. Several of these are reprinted here.

GEORGE B. KEEZELL
(*Norfolk Ledger Dispatch*)

Two decade's ago when George B. Keezell, of Rockingham, "The Tall Sycamore of Cub Run," retired from the State Senate he enjoyed the reputation of knowing more about the finances of Virginia than any other one man in or out of the General Assembly. As chairman of the Finance Committee, a far more powerful body than it is today—that was before the day of the Governor's budget—he had climbed to a position of eminence after a score of years of service in the Senate, when he was the colleague of Edward Echols. William Hodges Mann, Ben T. Gunter and other leaders of that period.

A man of unusual physique, Mr. Keezell was a prominent figure at the State Capitol for forty years, although some ten years elapsed between the termination of his services in the Senate and his return to the Legislature as a member of the House of Delegates, where he served four terms retiring in 1929 to accept the appointment as county treasurer of Rockingham.

While out of the General Assembly Mr. Keezell, one of the most successful farmers in the Valley, embarked in the newspaper business at Harrisonburg and was the mainspring of what is one of the most flourishing of up-state dailies, now controlled by former Governor Byrd.

Old-timers in Virginia public affairs will recall that it was Senator Keezell who was responsible for the addition of three Normal Schools (now Teachers Colleges) to the educational system of the state. He was determined that Harrisonburg should have a Normal School, and, when confronted by rival claims of other cities, he engineered a program that co-ordinated the strength of the Southwest and Northern Neck with that of the Valley, and the institutions were established—one at Harrisonburg, another at Radford, and a third at Fredericksburg—while the Farmville school was already in existence.

While an up-state legislator, Mr. Keezell was always interested in the development of the sea-food resources of Tidewater, and for twenty years served as a member, and for a considerable time as chairman, of the Commission of Fisheries, under the set-up existing at that time. He was a friend and lieutenant of the late Senator Thomas S. Martin, and his death marks the passing of one of the few remaining men in public life whose careers began back in Readjuster days.

GEORGE B. KEEZELL—COUNTY MAN
(*Charlottesville Progress*)

George B. Keezell, who died at his home near Keezletown, in Rockingham County, stood out among Virginia's public men of two generations. In politics from the time he was able to cast his first ballot, when he was elected justice of the

peace in his native county, he remained a public figure of consequence throughout the state until the moment of his death. Unlike many men of his age, he never thought of retirement. He had fairly lived in the action and excitement of the game. That he should have answered the final summons while still in harness was the most natural thing in the world to those who had known him through the years he had been a power in Rockingham County, and in the state during his long service in the General Assembly.

Huge in stature and rugged in appearance, there was no way for Mr. Keezell to keep out of the public eye. But his mountainous figure was by no means the sole reason for more than fifty years of prominence. The lack of oratorical polish and attractive phrase-making, he substituted well with a brand of shrewdness and plain common sense that gained for him and the causes he espoused many a hard fought battle on the floors of the General Assembly. His opinions were respected with a great deal more than the thunder of his voice or his unusual physical proportions. The first was generally the result of careful and painstaking analysis; the others were natural, never over-played. He was an easy man to know and the thousands who called him "Barney" will remember that his heart was as huge as his body; that his brain, clear and scornful of petty detail, brought him to the point with astonishing directness.

Mr. Keezell was a typical "county man." His interest and influence though state-wide were always centered about his constituency. Nothing shows this better than the consistent fashion with which he was returned to office, and nothing better than that could indicate that he had accomplished almost perfectly that exceedingly difficult feat for all public men—honor in his own country and among his own people. At the age of twenty-nine, in 1883, he was elected to the State Senate where he served to 1911, resigning to become treasurer of his county. Once only was he defeated. Eight years later he was sent to the House. . . .

During his service in the Senate he became chairman of the Finance Committee and served on other important groups of that body. He was the author of the bill for the establishment of Harrisonburg Teachers College and the most potent force for its passage. He was also outstandingly identified with former Governor Byrd in the fight to defeat the bond issue movement for the construction of State highways. One of his accomplishments, also, was the inauguration of new business methods in the treasurer's office of his county, many of which have been adopted by the State Accountant.

Mr. Keezell was not a statesman, but he was a public servant of the highest worth. Editor, politician, farmer, and business man, there was little that actual experience had not taught him; little of all he knew that he did not use to advantage at a moment's notice. And withal he was a staunch friend—kindly, charitable and widely beloved.

Few have left so long and so worthy a record.

DR. DEWEY SPEAKS

Speaking in a nation-wide radio address Sunday night, October 25, Dr. John Dewey, veteran professor of philosophy at Columbia University, and author of many university texts, said:

"The sense of unsolved social problems is all about us. There are problems of crime, of regard for law, of capital, of labor, of unemployment, of stability and security, of family life, of war and peace, of international relations and co-operation—all on a larger scale than the world has seen before. Unless education prepares future citizens to deal effectively with these great questions, our civilization may collapse.

"Invention rather than custom determines the course of events. Our mechanical devices and processes have got far ahead of our capacity to plan and to enjoy—ahead of our minds, in short.

"The gaps between our machines and our ability to control them for human ends is widened because education has clung to old traditions and aims of culture in the face of the new industrial situation.

"We have altered from a population with simple political problems to one with extremely difficult and complex issues. The problem of democracy is no longer chiefly governmental and political. It is industrial and financial—economic. The depression is warning that we live in an age in which education must take on new responsibilities and come to grip with realities. The schools, like the nation, are in need of a central purpose which will create a new enthusiasm and devotion, and which will unify intellectual plans.

"In earlier days there was an aim which worked throughout the whole system. Education was a key to individual success. There was always a frontier just beyond and the pioneer advanced to take possession of it.

"This earlier purpose has lost its vitality and its meaning. Except for a favored few,

there is no longer any unbounded opportunity for advancement open to individuals. We live in an epoch of combination, consolidation, concentration. Unless these combinations are used democratically for the common good, the result will be an increasing insecurity and oppression for the mass of men and women.

"Education must cultivate the social spirit and the power to act socially. Competitive motives and methods must be abandoned for co-operative. There must be a purpose and methods which will carry over the earlier ideals of political democracy into industry and finance.

"Only in respect to methods of thought and judgment should the earlier individualistic aim be retained; there it should be intensified. The motto must be: 'Learn to act with and for others while you learn to think and to judge for yourself.'

"When the ideals of democracy are made real in our entire educational system, they will be a reality once more in our national life."

Dr. Dewey had no sympathy for those who ridicule the American faith in education.

"In their work and achievements the schools represent the most important as well as the largest undertaking of the American nation," he said. "We can search the history of the world in vain for any similar occurrence. For the first time, there is a promise that universal education will become a fact, and not a dream on paper.

"If the whole democratic enterprise to which our fathers committed the American people is a delusion, then—but then only—is our trust in education a superstitious mistake."

THE CURIOUS KIDDIES

National advertisers complain that tens of thousands of dollars are wasted annually upon school children who at the request of their teachers clip every coupon in certain assigned magazines. "You will get a great

many beautiful advertising booklets and folders," one teacher is quoted as having told her fifth-grade class. While the good will thus resulting to national advertisers must in most cases be very small from a commercial point of view, yet most of them would willingly send the descriptive booklets and folders requested providing the expenditure could be limited only to the amount of postage and cost of literature involved, since the child of today is a potential prospect of tomorrow. The situation, however, becomes more serious when inquiries are followed up by either field representatives or by dealers. Here is a definite waste of much valuable time to say nothing about the gas which is burned in making such personal calls. Many instances are reported where field representatives have travelled from twenty-five to one hundred miles or more to find that what he thought was an excellent list of prospects were only members of some elementary teacher's class in English. To meet this situation many national advertisers now request on their reply coupon the age and occupation of the inquirer. If a public school teacher desires her pupils to answer advertisements for the purpose of having them receive "a big mail" or for any purpose other than that for which the advertiser intended, she should insist upon the children filling out the coupon with reference to age and occupation so that the advertiser might know who his prospect is and thus save himself the useless expenditure of sending a personal representative in such cases. This is only business courtesy.

SOUTHERN CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION

The annual meeting of the Southern Conference on Education will be held at the University of North Carolina from November 5 to 7. The general theme will be "Education and the Economic Depression." The conference will be held in co-operation with the district meeting of the

North Carolina Education Association. Speakers who have accepted invitations are: Dr. William L. Poteat, of Wake Forest College; Professor Thomas H. Briggs and Professor Paul Monroe, of Columbia University; Dr. Albert S. Cook, commissioner of education of Maryland; President Frank P. Graham, of the University of North Carolina; Dean J. J. Doster, of the University of Alabama; Dr. Sidney B. Hall, state superintendent of public instruction of Virginia; Mr. A. T. Allen, superintendent of public instruction of North Carolina; Mr. J. H. Hope, state superintendent of education of South Carolina; Mr. M. L. Duggan, superintendent of schools of Georgia; Mr. A. F. Harman, state superintendent of education of Alabama, and J. S. Richards, secretary of the Florida Education Association.—*School and Society*.

INEQUALITIES

The children of the rural districts of Missouri are subjected to many educational inequalities in comparison to those advantages enjoyed by the girls and boys of the urban centers, it is pointed out by Charles A. Lee, State Superintendent of Schools in Missouri, in the *United States Daily*. The article reads in part:

"There are many glaring inequalities in the length of term in the rural schools. Many schools have terms of only five or six months. More than 100 rural schools have already closed, and it will be impossible for the children to receive any more instruction until after the first of July.

"All the children of this state should have the privilege of attending a good school. We have not done much in the last decade to realize this objective.

"If we believe all the boys and girls of this state should have the privilege of attending an eight or nine months' term, we should do something besides talk about it. We should inaugurate a program and carry it through.

"Such inequalities exist because we have for many years considered it to be the duty of the people of each district to educate their own children. Such a doctrine has not and will not provide a minimum length of term for all school districts.

"Boys and girls in our larger urban centers have the privilege of attending a term of ten months. Boys and girls living in some of the rural sections have the privilege of attending a term of only sixty days.

"A child attending school in one of our larger urban centers for twelve years has the privilege of attending 200 days per year or a total of 2,400 days. Compare this with the opportunity of the child who attends a school having only a three months' term—or a total of sixty days for the year.

"It would take forty years for the child in that district to have the privilege of attending school for the same number of days as he would if he lived in St. Louis or Kansas City. Surely we cannot say we have equal educational opportunity under such conditions.

"The boys and girls living in rural sections of the state have never had a square deal in education. In order to receive a high-school education they have, in many instances, had to leave home, pay their board and room rent, and their tuition. . . .

"Every person interested in the future welfare of this state should here and now resolve that he will, during the next few years, do everything within his power to see that the boys and girls living on the farm lands of Missouri shall be given a square deal in education, so that the stigma of unequal opportunities in education which we now see at every turn may be forever erased from the records."

The head and the heart are not more vitally connected than thought and virtue.

—WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.